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## **PRIME MINISTER**

12/95

**E M B A R G O E D:** 1700 Sunday 26 February 1995

### **STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP VISIT TO GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS**

I will pay official visits to Germany and the Netherlands from 6 to 15 March 1995. During a stop-over in Singapore on 5 March I will hold talks with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. I will take the opportunity of my presence in Europe to travel to Copenhagen on 12 March to speak at the United Nations World Social Summit.

My visit to Germany will be the first by an Australian Prime Minister since re-unification in 1990, one of the central events in a period of profound change in Europe and the world.

Germany is the world's third-largest economy and the biggest country in the European Union. It has an important and growing international role. It is Australia's ninth-largest trading partner, with bilateral merchandise trade worth \$4.76 billion in 1993/94, and our seventh-largest source of foreign investment.

Our relationship with Germany is very important economically and politically for Australia, but I believe it has not yet matched its potential. Both countries have changed greatly in recent years and I hope my visit will help to give the relationship a new direction.

I am looking forward to discussions with Chancellor Kohl, President Herzog and senior ministers of the German Government as well as the state premiers of Lower Saxony and Brandenburg and the Governing Mayor of Berlin.

An important element in my program in Germany will be my participation in the opening of CeBIT, the world's largest information technology and telecommunications exhibition in Hanover on 7 March.

I am very pleased Australia has been chosen as this year's partner country at CeBIT, an honour given to only one country at each exhibition. More than 150 Australian suppliers of information technology and telecommunications

software and equipment will be represented. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Australia and Australian manufacturers to demonstrate to an international as well as a European audience our capabilities as a supplier of world-class high technology and services.

I will have further discussions with senior German business people and financial leaders in Berlin.

In this fiftieth year since the end of the Second World War, I will also lay a wreath on the graves of Australian servicemen who are buried at the Commonwealth war cemetery in Berlin.

In Potsdam, I will launch a new Australian Studies Centre at the University of Potsdam. This multi-disciplinary centre, which will work closely with German and Australian business and industry, will assist our objective of making Australia and Australian capabilities more widely understood in Germany.

I will visit the Netherlands for official discussions on 13 March at the invitation of Prime Minister Kok. I will have talks with the Prime Minister and his senior Ministerial colleagues and I will meet senior Dutch business leaders. I will also pay a courtesy call on Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, who visited Australia in 1988.

Australia has an old and important economic relationship with the Netherlands. It is the sixth-largest foreign investor in Australia and our 18th ranking trading partner. In addition to our traditionally robust exports of primary products, Australia's exports of manufactures to the Netherlands are growing strongly. We also share a wide range of international interests.

In both Germany and the Netherlands, I will be emphasising Australia's potential as a commercial partner and as a regional trading base for European firms wanting to enter the Asian market.

I will visit Copenhagen on 12 March to speak at the United Nations World Summit for Social Development. Australia has been involved heavily in the preparations for this meeting, which a large number of Heads of State and Heads of Government will attend.

I expect my discussions with Prime Minister Goh, which follow his very successful visit to Australia in September last year and further talks we had at the APEC leaders' meeting in Bogor, to focus on the wide range of regional and bilateral issues, including APEC, on which Australia and Singapore are co-operating very closely.

**CANBERRA**

26 February 1995